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REPORT NO. [redacted] 50X1

COUNTRY USSR

DATE DISTR. 26 Feb 54

SUBJECT Morale of Soviet Border Troops

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REFERENCES:

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION 50X1

[redacted]

1. On the surface MVD morale appeared very high in comparison to that of the Soviet Army. Actually there was a great deal of dissatisfaction and low morale. This was manifested by the following:

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a. Suicides [redacted] had an average of two or three suicides per year per 2,500 men).

b. Drunkenness (common among both officers and EM).

c. Refusal to attend political lectures.

d. Attempted refusal to stay on guard duty in excess of the prescribed eight hours.

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e. AWOL's (two or three per month [redacted]

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f. Desertions [redacted] two [redacted] rumors of other 50X1

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desertions [redacted] no figures or other data).

2. Causes for the above (in order of importance):

a. Distressing letters from home: e.g., "When are you coming home?"; "The roof is leaking."; "The hut is falling apart."; "We have no time to grow food for ourselves."; "Wish you were home to help us."; "We have no food...shoes...clothing...please send us something.", etc.

b. Absence of females: MVD officers and re-enlistees (sverkhsrochniki) could bring their families with them to border garrisons. EM could not. Contact with the local population was discouraged because of the fear that EM might get friendly with the people

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and relax their vigilance. Political officers constantly warned EM against "spies", "saboteurs", "subversive elements", and "enemies" among the local populace.

c. Poor leave and pass policy: ordinary leaves were not granted to any border troop EM. EM highest in political and all-round training were given a 10-day leave plus travel time. Ten EM per battalion were permitted such leaves annually.

Compassionate leaves could be granted in cases of family deaths and extreme family emergencies. These had to be secured through the "rayvoyenkomaty" and were rarely approved. (esti- 50X1
mated that five compassionate leaves were granted each year.) Convalescence leaves could be granted to EM discharged after long hospital treatment. These leaves had to be initiated by hospital authorities and spent at home.

In outlying border areas EM worked seven days per week and were never given passes. In headquarters units in towns a small percentage of EM received passes Saturday or Sunday evening.

All officers were given a 30-day leave each year plus travel time. Some officers stationed in distant posts of central Asia received a 45-day leave plus travel time. To leave their post during and after duty hours, officers had to secure permission from their CO's.

d. Dissatisfaction with political lectures: political lectures 50X1
were dull and repetitive. Many EM refused to attend political lectures and were sent by the political officers to the battalion CO for disciplinary action.

usually received such answers as: "We have heard the same topics so many times that we can answer any written or oral test on them."; or, "We are fed up--we'd rather catch up on lost sleep than go to political lectures."

e. Long hours of guard duty: nce there was a shortage of EM, the guard duty was extended from 8 to 12 or 14 hours. EM did not get the seven hours of uninterrupted sleep to which they were theoretically entitled. They had to be coerced into standing guard above their regular guard hour, and it was a common occurrence to find a man sleeping on post.

3. Source knew of the following incidents of poor discipline:

a. As of June 1953, three men were in the guardhouse: one for being AWOL; one for drunkenness; and one for refusal to go on duty. This was about the average for the battalion.

b. About five per cent of the officers and EM drank to excess.

c. 50X1
an average of 25 men per 300-man unit contracted VD.
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50X1

4. Political officers and unit CO's received frequent directives on the improvement of troop morale. They were required to submit 50X1
monthly reports on morale and incidents of poor discipline.

5. In Source's opinion medical care was adequate. Officers were dissatisfied with the lack of PX stores, and they had to purchase food and clothing for their families on the local market at high cost.

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6. Officers were also dissatisfied with the slow promotion policy. Unlike the army, the MVD had a slow rate of officer turnover and promotion, because of transfers, discharges, deaths, etc. EM were satisfied with the promotion policy because all who had 7 to 10 years of civilian schooling, plus physical qualifications, had the opportunity to attend NCO school and OCS.

7. Source stated that MVD troops were not 100% loyal to the Communist regime, and in the event of war many might be expected to defect.

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